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# Fulfilling the Mission Statement through Senior Projects

## Abstract

This descriptive study researched the benefits of Senior Projects as a culminating activity during the senior year of high school. The anecdotal evidence shows that Senior Projects help keep students motivated and interested during the final semester of their high school years. More importantly, this paper focused on the impact that a Senior Project program has at fulfilling a school's mission statement. Eighty-six students at Calvin Christian School in Escondido, California were surveyed regarding the school's mission statement; a high percentage felt that the mission statement was being fulfilled via extra-curricular activities (i.e., chapel, spiritual emphasis week) while a considerably lower percentage felt that the mission statement was being fulfilled through the curriculum.

During the last year, thirty-eight seniors performed a Senior Project that required them to write a research paper, propose a community project, and make a presentation. Following the Senior Projects, an exceptionally high percentage of students felt that the Senior Project helped to fulfill the school's mission statement.

The literature review examined a variety of different Senior Project programs across the country and highlighted a number of common characteristics of successful programs.

The results found that the documented Senior Project programs report positive anecdotal evidence, albeit superficial, i.e., increases student motivation and reduces "senioritis." However, all curricular programs need to be evaluated in light of the school's mission statement. The successful programs saw the superficial benefits, but they also need to evaluate the program based on a coherence with the school's mission statement.

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Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

Fulfilling the Mission Statement through Senior Projects

by

Steve Kortenhoeven

B.A. Dordt College, 1991

Descriptive Research Report  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Education

Department of Education  
Dordt College  
Sioux Center, Iowa  
September 2001

Fulfilling the Mission Statement through Senior Projects

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgement Page .....	i
Table of Contents .....	ii
List of Figures .....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
The Benefits of the Senior Project.....	4
The Senior Project Fulfilling the School's Mission Statement.....	7
Review of Literature .....	10
Implementation .....	24
References .....	35
Appendix A .....	37
Appendix B .....	38
Appendix C .....	39
Figure Captions .....	40
Figure 1 .....	41
Figure 2 .....	42
Vita Sheet .....	43

## **List of Figures**

- Figure 1      Fulfilling the Mission Statement: Extra-Curricular vs. Curricular
- Figure 2      Fulfilling the Mission Statement: Senior Projects

## **Abstract**

This descriptive study researched the benefits of Senior Projects as a culminating activity during the senior year of high school. The anecdotal evidence shows that Senior Projects help keep students motivated and interested during the final semester of their high school years. More importantly, this paper focused on the impact that a Senior Project program has at fulfilling a school's mission statement. Eighty-six students at Calvin Christian School in Escondido, California were surveyed regarding the school's mission statement; a high percentage felt that the mission statement was being fulfilled via extra-curricular activities (i.e., chapel, spiritual emphasis week) while a considerably lower percentage felt that the mission statement was being fulfilled through the curriculum.

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The results found that the documented Senior Project programs report positive anecdotal evidence, albeit superficial, i.e., increases student motivation and reduces "senioritis." However, all curricular programs need to be evaluated in light of the school's mission statement. The successful programs saw the superficial benefits, but they also need to evaluate the program based on a coherence with the school's mission statement.

## Introduction

Every year new educational programs are started in schools across the country. Many of these programs are only old educational fads dusted off, renamed, and resurrected. Many educators view these programs pragmatically, i.e., if they work, use them. However, it is important that these programs help the school fulfill its mission statement, accomplishing the educational purpose of the school. Senior Projects is a program that has been recently resurrected and implemented. However, the new popularity of the Senior Project stems from a pragmatic philosophy of education rather than an in-depth analysis of the program's benefits. The Senior Project appears to reduce "senioritis," motivate students, and engage the community; while these superficial benefits are important, educators need to evaluate the program's success in light of fulfilling the school's mission statement.

The renewed interest in Senior Projects has prompted a number of American high schools to implement programs. Currently there are over 300 high schools in America that have formal Senior Projects in place (Wolk, 2000). There are overwhelmingly positive reactions from students and teachers about the programs.

The Senior Project is a capstone assignment during the second semester of the senior year that involves three main interrelated items: a research paper, a service project, and a presentation (Lorenz, 1999). While the Senior Project motivates students, it also connects the traditionally fragmented curriculum to the school's mission statement, thus, unifying the curriculum. Additionally, the curriculum is directly connected to the student's community. The curricular coherence and the relevance to the "real world" both promote meaningful learning, i.e., "relating new information to knowledge already stored in their



long-term memories” (Ormrod, 1995, p. 254).

The first aspect of the Senior Project is the research paper. Although the research paper has been taught for years, the Senior Project topics must be chosen by the students and need to be of personal relevance to the student and his/her world, thus promoting “ownership.” They are encouraged to choose a topic that “they have always wanted to do...a current hobby or sport...a potential career...[a] special interest” (Cowan & Carter, 1994, p. 58). Cowan and Carter (1994) acclaim the benefits of student ownership by stating that the “students’ appetite for learning increases as they take ownership of their senior project” (p. 58). In light of “ownership” the authors additionally state, “If we want our students to be enthusiastic, self-directed learners, we must allow them to direct their own learning at least once. What better time than at the end of their high school careers?” (Cowan & Carter, 1994, p. 58).

The second and most distinguishing aspect of the Senior Project is the community project. The student takes what he/she has been learning via the research paper and considers how to use his/her learning in the community. The student writes a proposal which is approved by the lead teacher, and then he/she begins to implement the proposal. The community projects are as varied as the topics: students have worked with elementary classes to teach a unit on their topic (Lorenz, 1999); one student planned a Community Expo at the local public library to promote the school and celebrate his community (Miller, 2000); other students have even repaired siding for a low income housing complex as an extension of their learning (Healy, 1993). The project requirements can easily be adjusted to fit each school’s individual community and needs. The documented research focused on primarily individual projects; however, group projects or whole class projects could

also be beneficial to improving the culture and building community among classmates (Healy, 1993)

The third and final aspect of the Senior Project involves a reporting of the student's findings to the school community. Each student develops a presentation that accurately represents both his/her research paper and community project. The parameters of this presentation must remain flexible due to the variety of projects being completed. The presentation should be the culminating activity of the Senior Project; it is a celebration of the work already completed rather than an isolated activity (Lorenz, 1999). The students are assessed during this phase by a panel constructed by each student specifically for his/her project. The panel usually includes, at least, the lead teacher, a peer, and an expert/mentor from the community; however, the student is also informally evaluated by a much larger group since he/she is presenting in an open forum to the community, i.e., parents, community leaders, and fellow students (Stoner, 2001). By involving many from outside of the school to participate, the entire community celebrates the accomplishments of the student and the success of his/her Senior Project.

While the preceding three elements of the Senior Project are essential aspects of many of the successful programs, flexibility is a key ingredient to implementing a program. The Senior Project can be adapted for any educational setting; in fact, the types of programs vary greatly. Some schools only have the Senior Project as an assignment in one class, while other schools use class time traditionally assigned to English, Social Studies, and Physical Education to work on their projects. Some programs even allow the students to work all-day for two weeks to finish their projects (Marklein, 2000).

Although many schools make the Senior Project a requirement for graduation, other

schools offer it as an optional substitution for exams (Huffman, 1993). While there is great diversity and flexibility in the implementation of the programs, most of the programs have in common the three aspects of the Senior Project: the research paper, the community project, and the presentation.

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the following questions regarding Senior Projects:

- Are there benefits to implementing the Senior Project program at the high school?
- Can the Senior Project fulfill the school's mission statement?
- Do students better understand the integration between curriculum and mission statement due to participation in the Senior Project?

These questions will be answered in light of a few assumptions. It is assumed that the school's mission statement is accepted by the school community as the community's desired goals for education. It is also assumed that unifying the school's curriculum with its mission statement will lead to the desired outcomes in students.

### **The Benefits of the Senior Project**

It is important to search for programs and pedagogies that promote meaningful learning; the Senior Project seems to accomplish this goal. Ormrod (1995) cites research showing that in order for meaningful learning to occur, the curriculum must be related to the student's life experiences and to his/her previous learning. Students relate new information to things already in their long-term memory by "filing" new information under "an appropriate superordinate category in their knowledge hierarchy" in a process called subsumption (Ormrod, 1995, p. 256). While this connectedness is vital, many traditional



schools are structured on fragmentation and isolation (Badley, 1994).

Badley (1994) recently studied student opinions about traditional, discipline-based schools and found that their responses about education included terms such as: “fragmentation,” “disintegration,” “frequent irrelevance to real problems,” “arbitrary,” “compartmentalization,” “aimless wanderings in the mere bypaths of knowledge,” “a glut of unassimilated and unrelated ideas,” “undigested lumps of information,” “splintering,” “cultural and educational dispersal,” “shreds and patches,” “academic islands,” “detached,” “bits and pieces of information,” and “isolation” (p. 4). In addition to the students’ reactions, the teachers have felt a “sense of cohesiveness and completion was missing” especially in the upper secondary grades (Lorenz, 1999, p. 79). If the curriculum is as fragmented as it appears to be, little meaningful learning is occurring. Because students need connectedness in order for meaningful learning to occur, schools need to change to ensure that students can make those connections.

Historically, there is precedent for connectedness in education to promote meaningful learning. In fact, Plato in *The Republic* emphasized how disjointedness will destroy a society while “nothing does it more good than whatever tends to bind it together and make it one” (as cited in Badley, 1994, p. 2). This idea of coherence was extended to the field of education by Marcus Vituvius Pollio, an ancient Roman educator: “To avoid scattering, studies should be interrelated, so that the body of one’s knowledge can be one” (as cited in Badley 1994, p. 2).

Summers (1989) implies that she has seen the Senior Project as an effective solution to educational fragmentation: “Only in school is learning fragmented into specialized subjects, assigned to experts, and rarely shared across those subject borders.

The senior project is breaking down some of these artificial walls by making learning the integrated process that it really is" (p. 63). Lynchburg College in Virginia has also developed a program called the Senior Symposium that works to eliminate fragmentation. The Senior Symposium's purpose, as stated in their introduction, is to "integrate the fragmented knowledge acquired by students through the traditional 'courses' offered by academic departments" (Huston, 1997, p. vii). This college sees the benefit of curricular coherence.

There are additional benefits of the Senior Project besides promoting meaningful learning. Each spring high school teachers face the problem of "senioritis." The "senioritis" issue has been the recent focus of a panel called the National Commission on the High School Senior Year. These educational professionals have evaluated the problem and studied a variety of possible solutions to "senioritis" (Dunn, 2001).

While students admit that they know that they have "senioritis," some are blaming the teachers: "Teachers expect us to slack off and to not do anything. They don't even try to make us more motivated....They cater to our senioritis" (Dunn, 2001, p. 12). Although this claim is made by a student suffering from "senioritis," she seems to address an issue that teachers need to evaluate; namely, what can the schools and teachers do about "senioritis"? Of all the programs that have been implemented, e.g., special classes, field trips, internships, scholarships for 8th semester work, early graduation, service projects, portfolio development, and performance based learning, one program consistently received excellent reviews: the Senior Project (Dunn, 2001; Cowen & Carter, 1994; Huffman, 1993; Lorenz, 1999; Miller, 2000; Summers, 1989; Wade, 1999). The Senior Project, for the most part, cures "senioritis" ("Cure Senioritis," 2000) and motivates the

students to work diligently on a research paper, a project in the community, and a presentation (Cowen & Carter, 1994; Lorenz, 1999; Summers, 1989).

Although the Senior Project has consistently received positive feedback from students and faculty, the majority of schools in America still don't offer Senior Projects. However, before stepping into the world of the Senior Project, schools need to examine carefully the philosophical background of the Senior Project, the anecdotal evidence of current programs, the strengths and weaknesses of each school's program, and the implementation concerns regarding the program. While the Senior Project seems to be a strong motivational tool for students, educators need to be careful not to fall into a pragmatic philosophy of education. If the educational community can step back to determine whether the Senior Project can help schools fulfill their mission statement, then the school system can begin adopting this "educational fad" as a curricular staple. However, if the results find that the Senior Project has no correlation to the school's mission statement and that the program doesn't enable students in fulfilling the school's mission statement, then it is just another "educational fad" that should not replace current programs and should not be implemented as a curricular requirement.

### **The Senior Project Fulfilling the School's Mission Statement**

While promoting meaningful learning and keeping the students motivated are valid reasons for implementing a program, they should not be the primary test of whether or not to implement a program. It is important that every program enacted in a school system be evaluated in light of the school's mission statement.

The mission statement is simply a concise philosophical statement that is intended



to guide all scholastic decisions. The mission statement that I will be using is that of a small, Christian school in Escondido, California:

The mission of Calvin Christian School, in cooperation with the home and church, is to teach the whole child from a Reformed perspective, providing children from Christian families with an excellent education for a life of Christ-centered service.

("CCS Mission Statement," 2000, Front Cover)

High schools across the country have mission statements, like the one above, that expect students to be ready to change the world; and lead "a life of ... service."

Wolterstorff (1966) doesn't believe schools are giving students assignments that prepare them to be active members of society: "It is nothing but a pious wish and a grossly unwarranted hope that our students trained to be passive and non-creative in school will suddenly, upon graduation, actively contribute to the formation of ... culture" (p. 110). If schools want to stay true to their service-oriented mission statements, they must do a better job of equipping students not only with the skills and knowledge to be change agents in the world but also with an attitude and desire to be life-long servants.

While many schools have spent extensive time and effort developing their mission statements, many in the school community either don't fully understand the mission statement or don't know that it even exists. The students are prime examples of this problem. In a survey conducted with 86 juniors and seniors from the aforementioned small, Christian school, the results show that a number of students have little knowledge of the school's mission statement. When shown the school's mission statement 32 (37%) students responded that they had never seen the school's mission statement and/or they

didn't know that it was the school's mission statement. Although many teachers and administrators champion the concept of the "hidden curriculum," the fact is that this curriculum far too often stays hidden to the students, i.e., nearly 40% of the students don't even know the school's mission statement when it is shown to them. The teachers and administrators need to work diligently to present more explicitly our mission statement to the students. The curriculum, being the aspect that makes schools distinct from other institutions, must boldly proclaim the mission to the students and greater school community. We, often, present our mission statement to the students through extra-curricular means, i.e., in assemblies, chapels, and school publications, while disregarding the mission statement in our curricular development. In the same survey of the small, Christian school in Southern California, the juniors and seniors were also asked whether or not they felt that their educational experience was fulfilling the mission statement. The results found that 88% of the students felt that their educational experience was properly fulfilling the mission statement. The disparity comes when asked to identify which aspects of their educational experience help them to fulfill the mission statement phrase: preparing the students for "a life of Christ-centered service." Of the 86 students surveyed, 88% identified extra-curricular aspects of the educational experience while only 51% cited curricular activities as helping to develop students as servants (Figure 1). These results show that in this high school the students' perceive that the overall educational experience meets the school's mission statement. However, a considerably greater number feel that the mission statement is addressed in extra-curricular areas rather than in the classroom.

Integrating curriculum with the school's mission statement is much easier proposed than enacted; however, there are programs that can successfully facilitate this

integration. The Senior Project is one of these programs. Teachers should focus on developing assignments and curricular activities that explicitly deal with the school's mission statement. The students see many examples of the mission statement tacked onto the curriculum rather than integrated into the curriculum. This continues the problem of fragmentation and disjointedness in our schools. If the administration and faculty are serious about fulfilling the mission statement, they must refocus the curriculum to center around the mission statement. The Senior Project is one program that will integrate rather than fragment the educational experience by uniting the mission statement with the curriculum.

### **Review of Literature**

There is a vast amount of documented Senior Project programs, and almost all of the articles written about these programs are positive. However, the findings are anecdotal and are based on superficial benefits, i.e., the programs promote meaningful learning and reduce "senioritis." Substantial, in-depth analysis of these programs is lacking; unfortunately, there aren't any longitudinal studies that evaluate the success of the Senior Project. Additionally, the positive reports are based primarily on the school community's response to Senior Projects; the reports especially focus on the students. While student interest is always a concern when looking into the impact of a program, it should not be the guiding principle or sole indicator of the success of a program.

There is a wide variety of documented programs that adhere to many of the tenets of the Senior Project. Some of the programs incorporate the Senior Project within one class while other programs allow students time out of school to work or travel in order to



complete their own program. Many of the developed programs have been carefully organized and implemented following school-wide planning sessions while other programs have been “stolen” from other schools and implemented by a single teacher to combat “senioritis.” Whatever the situation, the programs have many things in common. They all emphasize student-directed learning, personal research, and a presentation. Most, also, incorporate a project that is completed in the community.

One of the pioneers in the Senior Project is Woodlands High School in Hartsdale, New York. This program allows students release time to work at internships during their Senior Project semester. The project has been placing students into the community since 1971 when Victor Leviatin developed a pilot program that allowed his students to use class time to work on a sociological project. Leviatin’s program developed into WISE which stood for Woodlands Individualized Senior Experience. This program has moved Leviatin’s students into the American Stock Exchange, architectural firms, dental offices, and television and radio stations, among a variety of other fields. WISE was so successful that Victor Leviatin and a few colleagues now run a consulting firm for schools looking to create a Senior Project program at their school. In 1994 there were 37 schools that implemented the full WISE program; however, a number more have implemented some of its ideas in their own Senior Project programs. This is a very structured system where students have to “keep a daily journal, have weekly meetings with a mentor..., do research, and make a final presentation” (Wade, 1994, p. 765) Priscilla Ma, a recent WISE graduate, comments that “I think it’s a great program because you learn more about yourself. It makes you grow up and take responsibility for your actions” (Wade, 1994, p. 765). Another recent graduate, Eric Bassin, states “WISE reinvents the senior year....It

teaches people responsibility and communication and opens their eyes to the real world” (Wade, 1994, p. 765). As the WISE network grows, the programs seem to be developing into revolutionary programs with endless possibilities.

San Diego’s Hoover High School is another school that is on the cutting edge regarding high school Senior Projects. When Doris Alvarez, principal, first arrived at the school in 1987, the drop-out rate was 13% while drugs and violence was “visible.” Ms. Alvarez, a recent winner of the national high school principal of the year, incorporated Senior Projects and other elements recommended by the Coalition of Essential Schools. These changes have dramatically changed the climate at Hoover High School. The drop-out rate is now only 4% and a “sense of calm pervades the campus” (MacMillan, 1998, p. 2). The program at Hoover High School has the students working on individualized programs during all four years of high school. However, during the 12th grade year they focus more specifically on their chosen project. All of their projects are placed into a portfolio that allows each student to realize what he/she has accomplished over the high school years. These revolutionary ideas have enabled Hoover High to be recognized as “a model new urban high school,” an award given by the U.S. Department of Education specifically acknowledging schools with a challenging academic program coupled with a focus on real-world experience (MacMillan, 1998, p.1).

While Hoover High School has many graduates with success stories, the school’s programs are currently under fire. Hoover High School has been identified as one of the city’s lowest performing high schools on standardized test scores. The school has been praised for its innovative programs, but now it is being asked to focus more on the basics that are measured on standardized tests (MacMillan, 1998). The Senior Project is an



integral part of the curriculum at Hoover High School. However, success of the program is primarily based on anecdotal evidence.

The schools that participate in the WISE program and Hoover High School are schools that have embraced the Project-Based Learning aspect of the Senior Project; however, there are many schools that are running successful programs adhering to a more traditional educational philosophy and incorporating Senior Projects as a capstone assignment that challenges students to fulfill the school's mission statement.

Many schools that run a Senior Project program attempt to do so in a traditional, albeit fragmented, curriculum for most of the school year; at the end of the year the school then tries to integrate all of the learning by implementing a culminating assignment, e.g., the Senior Project. The Ellis School, an all-girls school in Pittsburgh, allows its students to spend 2 weeks away from school "in which they pursue an interest they haven't had a chance to explore" in the traditional system. The Ellis School's Senior Project places students in a wide variety of positions, e.g., an understudy with the flying trapeze at Cirque de Soleil in Toronto, a developer of a charity dance, a sailor, and an art installer. These programs "get them excited in a year when some of them are turning off and make them start taking some initiative in shaping other things in their lives" (Marklein, 2000, p. 9D). The Ellis School's mission statement seems to correlate nicely with the Senior Project:

The purpose of The Ellis School is to educate and foster the fullest intellectual and personal growth of girls in kindergarten through twelfth grade by providing them with a core of basic knowledge in a rigorous, lively and pluralistic school free from stereotypes. Ellis enables its

students to develop a positive self image and lifetime skills of leadership.

Ellis affirms its commitment to the larger community and prepares its

students to become responsible and contributing members.

(“The Ellis School,” 2001)

The senior students’ time away from school during the Senior Project at The Ellis School reflect their mission of a “commitment to the larger community” along with preparing their students to be effective members of society.

New Trier Township High School has a simpler mission statement; however, it also emphasizes community service and participation: “To commit minds to inquiry, hearts to compassion, and lives to the service of mankind” (“New Trier Township High,” 2001). This vision shows that, at least philosophically, New Trier Township High School is committed to building community and developing servants as well as cognitive growth. The high school’s Senior Projects show that the mission statement has been implemented and integrated into the curriculum.

New Trier Township High School has a variety of students getting a chance to work in the “real world” as they complete their Senior Projects. They have students learning aviation, creating music for television and radio segments, working at the Chicago Board of Trade, working in the construction industry, aiding teachers in local schools, and even working in the F.B.I headquarters in Chicago. All of these projects give the students a look at life after high school in the workforce. Sometimes a taste like this is just what these students need to motivate them during the last few months of high school (“Senior Projects Allow Teens,” 1993).

There are also vocational-technical schools implementing aspects of the Senior

Project in order to give students real life work experience. The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center in Providence, Rhode Island has had great success regarding their Senior Projects. "Although many seniors were initially reluctant to participate in the project, 80 percent pronounced it worthwhile afterward" (Wolk, 2000, p. 6) Their program requires each senior to complete a senior project working with community mentors. This senior project includes researching a topic, writing a research paper, and presenting their findings to a panel. "Former students testify that the work prepared them for college better than anything else they did" (Wolk, 2000, p. 6).

The New Castle School District in Delaware was faced with the complaint from businesses that high school graduates "can't solve complex math problems, comprehend technical materials, write a report or communicate it effectively." Their solution to the business community's concerns was to implement the Senior Project. Now the schools have each senior complete a research paper, develop a product, and make a formal, oral presentation before a faculty panel. An example of the success of this program is the construction of a miniature Victorian house complete with cedar siding, wainscoting, and wallpaper. This product was completed after an extensive study of architecture in the Victorian Period. Steve Godowsky, principal of Hodgson Vocational-Technical School, states that the Senior Project drives "our students to read, write and calculate better" (Healy, 1993, p. 6D).

Unfortunately, some schools only see the superficial benefits of keeping students interested and motivated through the end of the school year. Matthew M. Mandery of Jericho High School and John R. Lewis of Mineola High School both of New York use Senior Projects to answer the problem of "senioritis." The National Association of



Secondary School Principals' *NewsLeader* asks, "They have a proven history of good grades and hard work, so why do many seniors have a lack of motivation and a far-off look in their eyes?" (as cited in "Cure Senioritis," 2000, p. 6). Schools have tried to motivate these students academically with honors courses and Advanced Placement courses, but seniors are still unmotivated and unfocused. Mandery and Lewis have successfully used Senior Projects to keep seniors motivated until the end of the year. Their program also allows them to "explore areas of interest and gain a greater understanding of themselves" ("Cure Senioritis," 2000, p. 6).

Forest Grove High School in Oregon has rearranged the order of the Senior Project to focus more on the community project. Forest Grove High School seniors each choose a project to complete, then they write a paper on the project, and finally they present their findings. This changes the emphasis from the research paper to the project. In fact the paper is a reflective essay that comes from a journal that they keep during the project. By working primarily on the project each student is, in a sense, creating his/her own data for research. Students were encouraged to choose as topics hobbies, potential careers, or community service. One student even set out to prove "Why the Senior Project Should Be Abolished." This led her to uncover many of the additional benefits of the Senior Project: the school receives grant money because of the program to purchase computers, students have been given jobs because of their project, students have received scholarships, and one student even started his own business. Through surveys of students, mentors, and teachers, along with statistics on attendance and drop-out rates, she concluded that the Senior Project was the "best learning experience a student can have" (Cowan & Carter, 1994, p. 60).

While some schools have emphasized and embraced the superficial benefits of the Senior Projects, other schools have been able to encourage cultural changes through the Senior Project, thus fulfilling their service-oriented mission statement.

One of the more detailed and documented projects is from Franklin Road Christian School in Southfield, Michigan. The problems that this school faced with seniors was similar to many of the high schools: “senioritis” had set in, student perception of the senior year wasn’t about learning, grades failed to be the motivator after seniors were accepted to college, some students had so many credits that they had three study halls, seniors were arriving late and leaving early, and a sense of “cohesiveness and completion was missing” (Lorenz, 1999, p.79). The faculty didn’t want this to be the final experience and memory of high school, so they developed the Senior Project. Their Senior Project is a semester long class that is a graduation requirement.

The general requirements for the Senior Project at Franklin Road Christian School were:

- Select a topic in which you are passionately interested
- Investigate that topic by reading books or journals and interviewing professionals
- Initiate a relationship with an expert who would function as a mentor
- Write a research paper in the form of a lively and interesting magazine article
- Generate a product [community project] based on the new knowledge
- Keep a learning log chronicling the learning journey taken
- Compile a portfolio containing the evidence of the journey
- Present information, new skills, and insights with multi-media to an audience of peers, teachers, younger students, school board members, and parents.

(Lorenz, 1999, p. 79-80)

It is apparent that this school was implementing many of the innovative educational trends, i.e., portfolios, learning logs, authentic audiences, multi-media presentations, and project based learning. This Senior Project was revolutionizing the senior year, and, as expected, the students initially rebelled against it. The teachers commented that the most challenging part of implementing this project was dealing with student fears and complaints. After the students grudgingly completed their papers, they began to get excited about their projects. There were a variety of projects, many of them completed in groups, including teaching a section in a health class, producing a musical, creating brochures or other public service information, photographing a wedding, planning hiking and hunting trips, and teaching Tae Kwon Doe and aerobics classes. One student, Julie, commented on her project: "For the next couple of days, the idea kept nagging me. It was almost like a conviction. I kept thinking that an assembly might be able to help someone [with eating disorders]. I knew I couldn't just take the easy way out this time and sacrifice the chance to address an issue I knew was way overdue" (Lorenz, 1999, p. 82). She organized a girls' assembly on eating disorders and optimal nutrition. Julie has connected her learning with helping others; the Senior Project has moved her from a ego-centric view of education to one of service.

By completing this project, the students were being prepared for college and life beyond formal education. The students, rather than displaying "senioritis," had very positive, and insightful, things to say about their final semester of high school:

Elizabeth said, "I have a lot more confidence about my work and what I can accomplish....Once you're done you feel a lot better about yourself and can hold your

head up higher” (Lorenz, 1999, p. 84).

“Every minute I spent with those homeless men at the mission could quite possibly be the most important ones of my life,” Brian commented (Lorenz, 1999, p. 84).

“This is the best school experience I have ever had, and it has taught me more than any lecture or book could,” Paul said (Lorenz, 1999, p. 84).

Ada stated that “Throughout my project I kept thinking to myself that I didn’t understand why we had to do this and that it was a waste of my time. I am happy to say that I was seriously wrong. I have learned so many things, not just about my topic but of the real world”(Lorenz, 1999, p. 84).

Julie commented: “It’s hard to admit it, but I am sad to see my project over and the fruit of all my work come to a close. I know this won’t be the last of my study of eating disorders, though. I plan to continue to study” (Lorenz, 1999, p. 84).

These comments are the types of things that we want our students to say after they complete their high school education. Franklin Road Christian School has solved its “senioritis” problems along with fulfilling a service-oriented mission statement by motivating students towards a life of community service.

Gulf High School in New Port Richey, Florida has also seen wonderful results from the school’s Senior Projects. They require students to include a physical aspect of the Senior Project that works to improve the community. Senior Camillo Garcia wanted to learn more about his community, so his Senior Project researched his school and community. The distinctive community aspect of his project was to put on a Community Expo at his local library that highlighted his school and the community. Savannah Riegg developed a field day for 20 local foster children after completing her research paper on



the foster care system. She spent a lot of time recruiting volunteers and soliciting support from the local community for this field day. Not only did she learn about an aspect of our world, she made an improvement in that area of our world. This program in New Port Richey has garnished rave reviews from teachers as well as community leaders. A teacher, Kathy Trapp, at Gulf High School states, "It definitely gets kids to go beyond the walls of the classroom and look to the community" (Miller, 2000, p. 3). This community aspect causes students to focus their learning on helping others and improving their community. While the school's program is anecdotally successful; the true test is whether or not the school is fulfilling its mission statement. Gulf High School's Vision Statement also emphasizes the societal role that students must play:

"It takes a whole community to raise a child." Parents, students, business and community members will work with school staff in planning, implementing and assessing the educational program. Together we strive to ensure that each student will actively learn and grow, develop a positive self image, and become a responsible, productive member of society."

(Gulf High School Student Handbook, 2001, p.1)

The coherence between mission statement and the Senior Project is what needs to be celebrated at Gulf High School.

Another program that incorporates the community service aspect of the Senior Project is at South Medford High School in Medford, Oregon. While these students are only required to "develop a project related to the paper," many have gone above and beyond to try to help the community. Kerri has written a paper about the history of the Big Brother and Big Sister Program, but she has applied this knowledge by recruiting four



fellow students to become big brothers and sisters for four children from broken homes. Gary studied magic for his Senior Project and put on a magic show at a local elementary school. Jennifer researched the local homeless and transient population, and she used her knowledge to organize a benefit concert of local bands to raise money to help the homeless (Summers, 1989). All of these examples have tied their traditional research and learning to helping out in the community. This program encourages students to take what they have learned and make a positive difference in the world.

Forest Grove High School also encourages students to “find some way to repay the community that’s given so much to them” (Cowan & Carter, 1994, p. 58). This has led to a student planning a “Drug-Free Jamboree” for a local elementary school, another student helping a midwife care for migrant workers, a student volunteering with a fire department, and a student collecting clothes and other items for a shelter for homeless women (Cowan & Carter, 1994). Shaker Heights High School offers graduating seniors the option of completing a Senior Project or taking final exams. This program allows the students to spend 4 weeks exploring a career or serving in the community. The students are required to complete 100 hours of service or work on their project in order to complete this graduation option (Huffman, 1993).

Although most schools have positive anecdotal evidence to support Senior Projects, a few programs have tried to evaluate program success on objective and measurable topics. When the Senior Project is measured on standardized tests, attendance, and grade point averages, the results aren’t so encouraging. The research that evaluates the success of the program based on standardized tests (MacMillan, 1998), attendance, and grade point averages (Cofer, 1996) show no improvement.

Hoover High School in San Diego, California, one of the pioneers in Senior Project development mentioned earlier, has been identified as one of the 5 worst schools in San Diego County according to standardized test scores (MacMillan, 1998). In a world that is currently driven by test scores and cognitive growth, many programs, like the Senior Project, are being cut in order to emphasize raising the school's test scores. Hoover High School found that having a nationally recognized, award-winning, Senior Project program still placed them as one of the worst schools in the county because of low test scores and a low percentage of passing grades in identified classes. It even prompted a school board response that this ranking is a "message that failing schools won't be tolerated" (MacMillan, 1998, p. 3). Hoover High School is a failure when looking solely at test scores; however, it is a success when looking at alternative scales, including fulfilling the mission statement.

The San Diego School Board, like many school boards across the country, has recently adopted test scores as the sole measure of a successful school; however, the real assessment should come as each program is evaluated in comparison to the school's mission statement. Hoover High School's mission statement is as follows:

Hoover High School's shared vision is to educate all students in an integrated setting to become responsible, literate, thinking, and contributing members of a multicultural society through excellence in teaching and learning.

("Hoover Vision," 2000-2001, p. 8)

While Hoover High School has an innovative program, it seems that the school board emphasizes the aspects of the mission statement that can be measured through test

scores, i.e., “literate” and “thinking” in the Hoover Vision; therefore, it seems, the Senior Project at Hoover High School doesn’t help to fulfill the school board’s interpretation of the mission statement. However, there are parts of the Hoover Vision that are well-served through the Senior Project program, e.g., “responsible” and “contributing members.”

Hoover High School proves that a consistent interpretation of the mission statement is also necessary when evaluating programs. While educators can debate the definition of a successful school, the school’s programs must help students fulfill the school’s commonly agreed upon interpretation of the mission statement.

The Franklin County schools in Kentucky worked with a pilot study to determine whether service learning activities helped with student attitudes towards service, attitudes towards the subject and the teacher, grades, and attendance. Their findings indicated that grades and attendance didn’t improve during the service involvement; however, there was a positive impact on student attitudes towards a social issue or group of people. They also concluded that “long-term projects with the same service recipients can have more of an impact than one-time or indirect projects” (Cofer, 1996, p. 1).

Additional problems surface regarding implementation. Most schools went through the usual negative reactions of faculty and administration to new programs. However, some reports cited specific issues. Ken Jaffe, a Seattle principal, worried that “students who miss even a few weeks of academic courses such as calculus will be at a disadvantage when they arrive on college campuses” (Marklein, 2000, p. 9D). Another school found that some students chose topics that weren’t challenging enough for them (Lorenz, 1999).

While evaluating a school’s success solely based on test scores raises many



concerns, if the mission statement of the school only encompasses cognitive growth, test scores would seem to be an adequate tool of evaluation. However, the schools that have a more community-oriented mission statement have an obligation to evaluate each program in light of its mission statement above and beyond cognitive growth. Most of the documented reports endorse the Senior Project without a comparison to the school's mission statement.

### **Implementation**

Through examining a variety of Senior Project programs, successful programs have many of the same elements. Initially, all of the successful programs were developed and supported by innovative professional educators. The support of the entire faculty and administration is essential to a successful Senior Project. Summers notes that "what is unique about the senior project is that a whole staff in a public high school is working together to give young people an opportunity to try their wings and explore areas of interest" (1989, p. 62). This is an important message of community that the school can send to students. By showing students what can be accomplished when an entire school community works together, we are teaching them valuable life lessons about collaboration and service. However, it is imperative to have educators who are constantly striving for the best educational environment possible at their schools. When innovative teachers and administrators support a sound educational program, students benefit.

Although flexibility is important in implementation, there are some elements of successful programs that should be imitated. As stated earlier, the student must choose a topic of interest to him/her. This will promote ownership and motivation which will

increase the “student’s appetite for learning” (Cowan & Carter, 1994, p. 58).

When the student is close to deciding on a topic, it is important for him/her to write a proposal or rationale for the project (Appendix A). At this point the student will write a few paragraphs on the reasons why he/she chose the topic. It is vital that the student also considers the benefit of the project and learning to the greater community; this aspect of the proposal discourages a solely ego-centric view of education. After the teacher has approved the proposal, the student can then begin the research. The teacher’s guidance at this early stage will prevent the student from going too far in the wrong direction. The proposal also corresponds to what the students will be required to do in a real work setting.

After the students have chosen a topic of personal interest, the second important part of the program is the research which is also unique to the student and his/her topic. Students need to complete research that will directly benefit their Senior Project; this might include a variety of traditional and non-traditional research methods. When the students chose the mode of research to solve their individual research questions, they are more closely experiencing a real world problem solving situation.

Following a good deal of the research, a student needs to begin to formulate his/her project evaluation panel. The panel will assess the student at the final presentation, but they will also serve as facilitators to the student along the way. It has been recommended that this panel consist of at least one faculty member, one “expert” from the community, and a fellow student. This panel can be developed to fit the school community and program parameters, but most successful programs have a panel consisting of, at least, those three individuals (Stoner, 2001). Some requirements of the

student could be to meet with his/her faculty advisor at least once a week and with the community “expert” at least once a month. These constraints can also be adapted to fit each unique school environment and program.

If the school’s mission statement includes an aspect of service and/or culture changing, and if the school is committed to integrating the curriculum with the mission statement, the most important aspect of the Senior Project is the community project. Each student is encouraged to consider seriously how his/her learning can affect the community in a positive way. This could range from a community forum on a social issue to volunteering at a non-profit organization. However, it is crucial that the students begin to see their education globally as preparing them to improve the world. If we want the students to be changers of culture, we must give them the opportunity to practice this in a tangible way. The Senior Project will move students from discussing service to practicing service.

Project implementation is also one of the most difficult parts for the student to accomplish. For this very reason, it is important that the student has an advisory panel that has seriously considered this aspect in professional life. This might require a training session for panel members so that they can be most effective as advisors. However, once students are given a sufficient list of possibilities and examples of other topics and projects, they will see that most topics will easily lead to use in the community (Appendix B).

The presentation is the culminating activity and often is the part of the project that gives students the most stress; however, the presentation should be seen as a celebration of the academic accomplishments of the individual students and class as a whole. This is a



wonderful time of presenting to the school community the positive accomplishments of the graduating seniors. The programs that are successful follow the same pattern regarding the presentations. A night (or two) is set aside at the end of the year in which the entire school community is invited to attend a mass assembly that celebrates the senior class (Lorenz, 1999). The presentation night accomplishes many positive things. It allows the parents of the graduating seniors to applaud academic accomplishments which are often relegated to the classroom. It promotes the positive actions of teens in the community which breaks down the common stereotypes of teenagers in our society. It also promotes the school to the greater community and builds school spirit and unity (Cowen & Carter, 1994). All of these things focus the students on affirming the school's mission statement and promoting the goals of education. The requirements for the presentation vary greatly, but most successful programs have each student use technology to present his/her information, e.g., presentation software, overhead transparencies, slides, or charts. He/she is also encouraged to work in a multi-media format, i.e., using at least two presentation modes. By requiring students to use a variety of presentation methods, the entire class is able to evaluate realistically the effects of each style on the audience. This gives students the skills to present comfortably in the future.

Assessment of the Senior Projects must be real assessment that evaluates how the students can use the knowledge that they have learned to affect the community, thus fulfilling the school's mission statement. The areas that are assessed by the lead teacher include: the research report, the implementation of the community project, and the presentation. Although the panel will only evaluate the presentation, they give feedback to the lead teacher throughout the process. This feedback will be assimilated by the lead

teacher to establish a final grade. In some schools this final presentation grade has even been used to replace second semester final exams (Huffman, 1993). Assigning this much weight to the presentation ensures completion of the Senior Project in order to graduate as well as puts the responsibility in the student's hands.

During the Spring 2000 semester and the Spring 2001 semester, I implemented a truncated version of the Senior Project. The program involved approximately 80 students within the context of the senior English classes at Calvin Christian School in Escondido, California. I began the Senior Project as a final paper and presentation that the students had to complete before graduation.

During the Spring 2000 semester, my students chose topics, wrote proposals, conducted research, wrote research reports, and made presentations. I gave the students a list of possible topics as well as made available other resources. Once the topic was chosen, each student wrote a 3 paragraph proposal/rationale about his/her topic (Appendix A). The students were then trained in a variety of traditional (e.g. encyclopedias, books, periodicals) and non-traditional (e.g. video and audio tapes, interviews, internet) research methods. The class spent a week practicing how to document correctly along with a discussion on recording methods, i.e., notecards, research logs, video or audio recordings. The following week the students began their research. During this second week classroom time was spent discussing presentation methods. The computer teacher came into class and led a mini-lesson on PowerPoint software, and we discussed the benefits and weaknesses of a variety of presentation tools, e.g., overhead transparencies, videos, audio recordings, charts, and handouts. The third week, following the week of presentation preparation, the students were asked to contract for grades



(Appendix C). The students chose between an “A” and a “C” based on length of paper and length of presentation. This contract also tied the student to a specific due date for the paper and presentation. The students worked the next 2-3 weeks on finishing their paper and polishing their presentation. The year ended with the student presentations. These presentations, along with the papers, were evaluated by me; the students gave input through a peer-evaluation form. The final presentations were given within my self-contained classroom, and no other adults were there to serve as a panel. This first year was a good beginning to the concept of the Senior Project.

The following year, Spring semester 2001, the students completed the same assignments; however, I included the aspect of the community service. While I felt that this was the most important part of the Senior Project, the limited time available at the end of the year made implementation difficult. The students were not required to implement a community service aspect to their topic. However, I did require the students to write up a proposal that outlined how their learning could help improve the community; I gave them extra credit if they implemented their proposal. My offer of extra credit drove some students to pursue implementation. However, the proposal alone caused students to consider some special activities and opportunities to use their knowledge to improve our society.

Because we have students with diverse interests, we have a wide variety of project topics; however, every student was unified in the fact that they all had to present a community proposal with their topic. San Diego County provides a plethora of possibilities in the immediate community, and the senior class of 2001 used the entire county in their proposals. Janae Martin researched childhood cancers; her project led her

to Children's Hospital in San Diego. Her proposal was to set up a program where she would visit children with cancer and bring them donated items on a regular basis. Mike Hinger loves to use the deserts of Southern California for riding motorcycles and 4-wheelers. His project incorporated his love of riding in the desert with the need for safety and knowledge before you ride. Mike proposed to lead a seminar about desert riding and safety to a group of students who were planning to spend the weekend riding in the desert. Tracey Veres has taken advantage of the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park and the current concern over Hoof and Mouth Disease. She did her research paper and presentation about the disease and created a brochure for the Wild Animal Park informing visitors of the dangers of this disease. Another thing that is found in the Escondido/San Diego area are community gardens. These gardens are made available for low income members of the community. Phil Howerzyl, after researching and presenting on Avocados, proposed to plant Avocado trees in the community gardens which helps the impoverished in our society.

Other students pursued their interest in an occupation. Rachel VanderPol is interested in pursuing forensic science, and her proposal was to organize a finger printing day for our elementary school. This would be combined with a safety day that the Escondido Police Department could present. Another student, Nichole Kroon, presented on the topic of clothing fashions and fads; her community proposal was to donate old clothes to various community shelters. Marjorie Spurr has spent many hours helping her grandmother who is a stroke victim. Her experience has motivated her to volunteer with a physical therapist to help him rehabilitate stroke victims. Alex Agard is an accomplished pianist whose project focused on how a piano works; however, his proposal moved him to

present a free recital for elderly people. Rebecca Hadjes researched the immunization debate for her Senior Project. This led her to volunteer at a local hospital informing new moms of the importance of immunizations.

This year, the senior class chose a wide range of topics from punk rock to rock climbing to diesel engines. The beauty of the Senior Project is the fact that many students rarely are given the opportunity to work on in-school what they love to do outside of school. Not only are they given this opportunity, but they are forced to grapple with using their topics to serve the community, thus fulfilling the mission statement. The unifying factor, the community proposal, also emphasized the school's mission statement. As each student discussed a community proposal, the mission statement was reinforced.

Only 5 students actually completed their proposal. This year I found it unfeasible to require the students to complete the community service proposal because the project was begun too late in the school year; however, in the future I would like to begin the Senior Project earlier and make the community project the cornerstone assignment in the Senior Project. Rebecca Hadjes actually volunteered at Palomar Hospital in the Birth Center informing new parents of the importance of immunizations; she will follow this up by helping the hospital staff give reminder phone calls to the new parents when it is time for the immunization. Tracey Veres also completed her project of informing visitors to the Wild Animal Park about the seriousness of Foot and Mouth Disease. Nichole Kroon was able to donate 3 bags of clothes to Salvation Army and 1 bag of clothes to Pioneer Elementary School to be used for children who don't have sufficient clothing. One student, Chris Serry, volunteered during a holiday at a Mazda repair shop helping to repair rotary engines. Alex Agard performed a piano recital for "Pairs and Spares," a group of



retired people, at the First United Methodist Church in Escondido. Many more students have plans to complete their project during the summer. Brian Andreason has organized a benefit concert comprised mostly of Christian punk bands to raise money for the community. At the end of the school year, he already had four bands scheduled to play. This is an example of what the Senior Project motivates students to do -- serve in the community.

The students all had wonderful things to say about the Senior Projects. The only negative comments were regarding the amount of work and the stress level that the paper and presentation brought with it. Most students gave glowing reports about the project. Rebecca Hadjes commented, "This assignment encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone and reach out to the community." Another student, Marjorie Spurr, stated, "I feel that this project was God's way of telling me what I should do in my life -- help [stroke victims]." Alex Agard evaluated the community proposal aspect of the assignment as, "The community proposal steers us in the service direction." Alex's comment sums up what the school's mission statement says; we want to steer students towards a life of service.

While the most beneficial results are from the student's own personal topics, a few of the students commented on the additional benefits of watching a wide range of topics: Michelle Galyean stated, "Listening to all the speeches gave me a better idea of how we can help others and be good examples of God's love." Nichole states, "I liked how we all had to apply a Christian perspective to our projects. This helped me see that God is the center of everything and all the things we do and study should have Him as our main focus."



The exit survey also reinforced the benefit of the Senior Projects. The senior class was asked if the Senior Project assignment helped them fulfill the mission statement of the school, specifically on two points: 1) Did the Senior Project provide you with an “excellent education”? and 2) Did the Senior Project help to lead you into “a life of Christ-centered service”? The results were overwhelmingly positive. Out of the 38 students who completed a Senior Project in 2001, 38 (100%) stated that the Senior Project provided them with an excellent education while 36 students out of the 38 (95%) stated that the senior projects helped to lead them into a life of Christ-centered service (Figure 2). As a school concerned with fulfilling our mission statement, these are the results that we want to emphasize. It is nice that Senior Projects discourage “senioritis” and motivate students; however, we should primarily celebrate the fact that it helps to fulfill the school’s mission statement.

The fact that students became inspired by their projects and proposals shows me that the Senior Project is a special program that gets students to consider the ends of education while fulfilling our mission statement.

Next year I hope to require students to implement their community project proposals. This will be followed up the year following with the presentation night(s) in front of a larger audience made up of the greater school community. In order for the Senior Project to be genuinely successful, a restructuring of the classes and class time needs to occur at least at the end of the senior year. The Senior Project is a wonderful and innovative program; however, it attacks the traditional classroom. Therefore, successful implementation would require a proposal to the school board and wide-spread faculty and administration support.

Professionally, a few areas need to be researched in order to pursue this program. Research should be conducted to confirm the assumptions stated earlier in the paper, namely, that curricular coherence with the school's mission statement will produce the school community's desired outcomes in the students. The logical next step would be to conduct an action research study analyzing student benefits of the Senior Project. While there is a lot of anecdotal evidence of success, action research and a longitudinal study is lacking. There are enough programs established around the United States that finding subjects and corresponding groups wouldn't be difficult. Research needs to be conducted to transform this educational fad into a standard, proven requirement for graduation.

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## Appendix A

### Senior Project Proposal

The proposal / rationale should include why you chose your topic. It must include the following:

#### Paragraph #1

1. What is your specific topic?
2. Why does this topic interest you?

#### Paragraph #2

1. In what ways will the greater community benefit because you have learned about this topic? What are your plans for the community service aspect of the project?
2. Why should we as Christians study this topic?

#### Paragraph #3

1. What do you intend to discuss in your paper? (tentative outline)
2. What do you intend to do for your presentation?

## Appendix B

English 4

Senior Projects

Possible Ideas - Topics/Service

### Topics

Plumbing Systems  
 Research on non-profit organizations  
 Violins  
 Ducks/hunting  
 Loneliness in the elderly  
 Research on a social problem  
 Any academic topic  
 Research a neighborhood  
 Research socio-economic issues  
 Solar Energy  
 Spiders  
 Aerodynamics  
 Drama  
 Violence in video games  
 The history/styles of shoes  
 Film making  
 History of a style of music  
 Advertising  
 Investing in Mutual Funds  
 Big Brother Big Sister Organization  
 Any vacation location  
 Homeless Problems  
 British Monarchs  
 Fly Fishing  
 Shaker furniture  
 Archeology  
 Drug and Alcohol Abuse  
 Graffiti  
 Foster Care Programs  
 Ski Safety  
 Blindness  
 American Sign Language  
 Fire / Fire Safety / Fire Fighting  
 Gardening  
 Eating Disorders  
 Early Childhood Development  
 Physical Therapy Topics  
 Outdoor Survival  
 Culinary Arts (Cooking)

### Service

Help to repair low income housing  
 Volunteer with the organization  
 Community recital  
 Building duck boxes for game commission  
 Visit Senior Citizen center  
 Write a journalism article to educate others  
 Convert to mini-lessons to teach to kids  
 Plan of revitalization; community newsletter  
 Mentor a child from the neighborhood  
 Provide a Solar Bar-B-Q at a local park  
 Create a friendly presentation for kids  
 Teach a mini-lesson on flying to kids  
 Puppet show for kids  
 Informative presentation for a parent group  
 Organize a shoe drive for an orphanage  
 Produce a claymation production for kids  
 Organize a benefit concert for the area  
 Produce a public service message for tv  
 Create a brochure on investing for college  
 Recruit individuals to "adopt"  
 Give a free Travelogue presentation  
 Organize a food drive to benefit homeless  
 Create a bulletin board for the library  
 Lead a Boy Scout group on a fishing trip  
 Create a Shaker chair to be auctioned  
 Lead an elementary class on a "dig"  
 Organize an anti-drug day at school  
 Clean up local graffiti  
 A Field Day for 20 foster care children  
 Develop a brochure for ski rental stores  
 Train a Seeing Eye Dog  
 Teach an elem. class on the basics of ASL  
 Volunteer at a local fire station  
 Work with a community garden  
 Make a mini-presentation to a health class  
 Volunteer as a teacher's aide  
 Help at a school for physically handicapped  
 Plan and lead a camping trip  
 Bake something for homeless / bake sale

## Appendix C

### Senior Project Contract

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to the grade contract completed below in regards to paper length and presentation length. In addition, I agree to perform the presentation and turn in the paper on the due date below. I also understand that I will be penalized for not staying within the contracted length parameters of both paper and presentation. I understand that a decision not to complete this assignment will cause me to fail English 4 for the 4th quarter and may jeopardize my graduation.

I agree to write a research paper that is the length of:

\_\_\_ 7-10 pages (50 pts.)

\_\_\_ 5-7 pages (40 pts.)

\_\_\_ 3-5 pages (30 pts.)

I agree to complete a presentation the length of:

\_\_\_ 15-20 minutes (50 pts.)

\_\_\_ 10-15 minutes (40 pts.)

\_\_\_ 5-10 minutes (30 pts.)

\*The paper and presentation will both be graded on quality (50 pts. each).

I agree to make my presentation and turn in my paper on the following date:

\_\_\_ Wed.        May 23

\_\_\_ Thur.       May 24

\_\_\_ Fri.         May 25

\_\_\_ Tues.       May 29

\_\_\_ Wed.        May 30

\_\_\_ Thurs.      May 31

\_\_\_ Fri.         June 1

Signatures:

(Student)	(Date)
(Teacher)	(Date)

### **Figure Captions**

#### **Figure 1      Fulfilling the Mission Statement: Extra-Curricular vs. Curricular**

The graph shows the difference between student opinions regarding the fulfillment of the school's mission statement at school. Of the students surveyed, 88% felt that the school's mission statement was fulfilled through extra-curricular activities, while only 51% felt that the mission statement was fulfilled through curricular activities.

#### **Figure 2      Fulfilling the Mission Statement: Senior Projects**

Following the completion of the Senior Project in 2001, the 38 students who participated were asked their opinion regarding the Senior Project's ability to fulfill the school's mission statement. The students were asked regarding the following two phrases of the mission statement: "excellent education" and "life of Christ-centered service." The questions were:

- 1) Did the Senior Project provide you with an "excellent education"?
- 2) Did the Senior Project help promote a "life of Christ-centered service"?

This graph shows that 100% of the students felt that the Senior Project provided them with an "excellent education," while 95% of the students felt that the Senior Project promoted a life of Christ-centered service.



Figure 1

## Fulfilling the Mission Statement

### Extra-Curricular vs. Curricular

**Is the school's mission statement, i.e., preparing students for "a life of Christ-centered service," fulfilled in extra-curricular or curricular areas?**

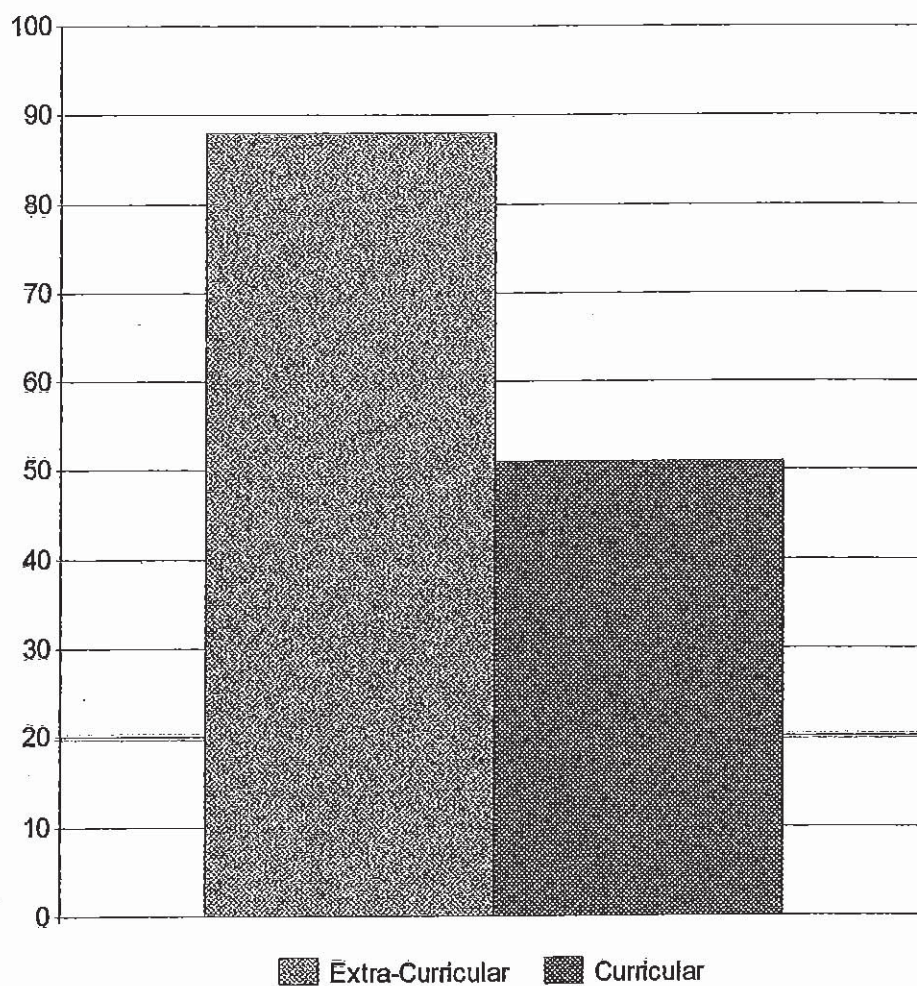
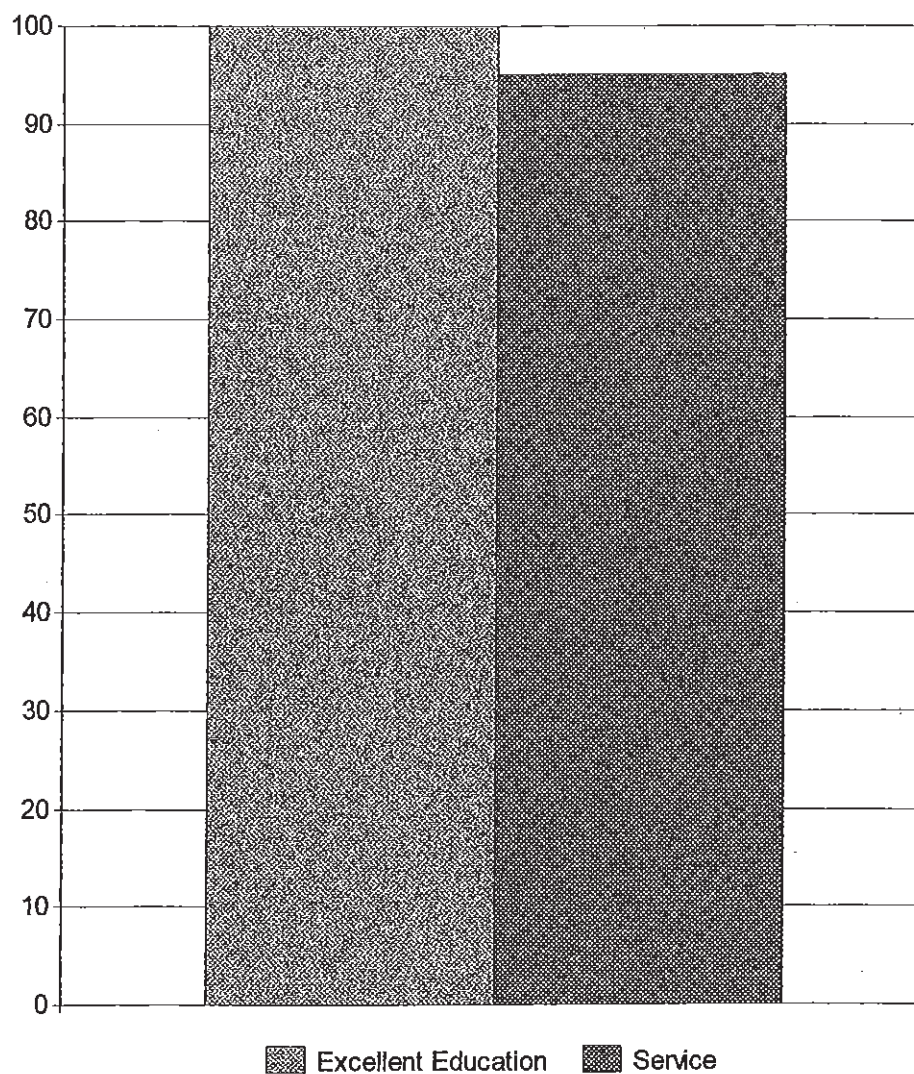


Figure 2

## Fulfilling the Mission Statement

### Senior Projects

**Does the Senior Project fulfill the school's mission statement by providing students with an excellent education and leading students into "a life of Christ-centered service"?**



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"Living the Mission." *The Cord*, Calvin Christian School, Fall 2000.